

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee of the CT Legislature
By Alberta Witherspoon, Public Housing Resident Network – PHRN
February 20, 2013**

Hello, my name is Alberta Witherspoon. I live at 358 Orange Street, in New Haven, CT, a federal public housing complex. I am a Board member of the CT Public Housing Resident Network – PHRN - and I am speaking tonight on behalf of our members. I am also the Resident Commissioner on the New Haven Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. For your information, the CT Public Housing Resident Network is a statewide organization of public housing residents living in state public housing, federal public housing, scattered site public housing, and public or private tenant-based subsidized housing.

I am here to urge you to not approve Governor Malloy's budget calling for the elimination of the Pilot program.

The removal of the PILOT money would hurt thousands of our poorest public housing residents, those who pay base rent in order to keep a roof over themselves and their children. They pay base rent because their monthly income is so small that 30% of it does not even add up to the minimum monthly payment (usually \$250 or \$300 per month) required to live in their communities. These families – the poorest in our communities - are already paying MORE than 30% of their income for public housing. Now, because Governor Malloy is proposing eliminating PILOT, rents will be increased and they will be paying MUCH MORE than 30% of their income for public housing. And please be advised that many of these families pay their own utility bills in addition to base rent. Obviously, their utility bills are rising dramatically at this time. Many will have to choose between paying the rent, the utility bill, and buying groceries to eat. They will not have the money to do all three.

My organization, the CT Public Housing Resident Network, also urges this committee to not approve the cutting of the Tax Abatement funds that Governor Malloy is also proposing to cut.

Many of our friends and family members live on fixed incomes in Tax Abatement Grant communities that will be devastated by the loss of these funds. Market rate rents are way out of reach for these folks.

We at PHRN believe that the message is clear: poor folks don't matter.

I am here to tell you that poor folks do matter. Over 8,000 families are affected by the removal of the PILOT and Tax Abatement Grant funds.

Thank you for your time and attention this evening.